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**UNKNOWN  
IMMORTALS**

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**HERBERT·MOORE·PIM**







Irene Owen Andrews.



**Unknown Immortals**  
**in the Northern City of Success**

The  
WILLIEK  
WOMAN



J.M.P. 1917





# UNKNOWN IMMORTALS

In the Northern City of Success

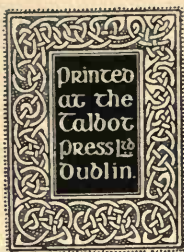
By Herbert Moore Pim

*Author of*  
*"The Pessimist" &c.*



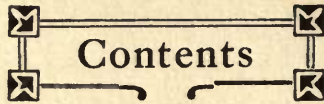
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To the  
Hon. B. Erskine of Marr  
in affection and  
admiration



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## PREFACE.

FROM childhood I have had a special affection for certain queer people. And when I came to an age at which I could write about them, I found myself puzzled, because I knew instinctively that realism would be quite useless as a method of describing them. So I treated them in a manner of my own. It is not idealism; it is, as the reader will see, something more than idealism. Yet I claim that they are truly described, and that just the impression which they made upon my mind has been truly reproduced, at least for myself, upon paper in the form of words.

I remember, as a very small child, visiting a lunatic asylum with my mother. Lunacy attracted me strangely; and to gain the experience which I required in order to sketch a lunatic in words, I "signed on" for the final lectures in a city asylum.

After my first sketch of lunacy, *The Madman*, was complete, I handed it to a medical authority; and he pronounced it

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exactly correct from his standpoint. He said I had caught the exact mental processes of a lunatic.

The amount of work which has gone to the making of this book could hardly be imagined. It suffices to say that I was at work upon *Monsieur Among the Mushrooms* at intervals for over four years. The original of *Monsieur Among the Mushrooms* is alive and prosperous. He is a perfectly amazing person, a man of considerable fortune, who has, I believe, been detained in an asylum on several occasions. He has the most powerful intellect whose action I have ever experienced. He conducts a large business during the day-time; but he may be discovered at four or five o'clock in the morning, pouring forth a stream of brilliance, and holding men in the cold street against their will. His brain works with such rapidity that he has constructed a language of his own, by means of which only the absolutely essential thought is presented to the hearer. I have seen calm men whipped into fury when they found themselves simply swept intellectually off their feet in argument with my model. I

remember standing for three hours watching and listening while he poured forth his wisdom, and spun intellectual circles round several prosperous and typical Ulstermen. This man has made a study of certain more or less mundane subjects, such as the average man should understand. He does not base his intellectual structure upon any dignified branch of learning or of the arts. And thus he beats the average man on his own ground, as it were, which makes the performance all the more astonishing. He gives his listener the impression that what he has made his life study is the one essential to a man who would claim to be cultured. I once asked him for his address, and said I desired to call upon him. His amazing eyes lighted up. Using this simple request as a text, he played intellectually with me, as a cat plays with a mouse; and then, suddenly taking pity upon me, he handed me, instead of a card, his account from the Corporation Gas Office; and beamed upon me when I proved myself worthy, by immediately opening it and reading out the address which I desired to obtain. In *Monsieur* I have drawn him exactly as he exists, save in the matter of

the physical description. Apart from that fact, there is nothing exaggerated; and the debate between Monsieur and the members of committee is almost as true as a description of such a debate could be. There you see my model and his method.

I am indebted to the Editor of the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* for permission to reprint *Monsieur Among the Mushrooms*.

The first five studies in this volume have appeared in *Nationality*; the sixth and eighth in *The Irishman*; the seventh, as already stated, in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*; and the ninth in a now defunct London monthly, *The Imp*.

Though we live, as George Moore complains, in an age when the vocabulary of English has become a starved and slipshod affair, there is no earthly reason why we should be hampered by the defects of our time.

This book represents a species of "retro-cessional progression": a return to the ample, classical age. It is for artists to compel the English to mend their philological manners.

HERBERT MOORE PIM.

*Dunmurry.*



## THE WILLICK WOMAN.

**I**N this city of success there is a company of venerable women who are older than Smithfield. Of all our mysteries these are the most mysterious. Their secret is with themselves. They sit in the shadow of the Custom House or near the pleasure steamer's pier, upon small stools; and before them there is a box upon which reposes a metal tray; and on the tray is a pyramid of periwinkles. To those who purchase, they offer a pin with which the periwinkle may be led to abandon his shell. That is what the world sees. But the world is very blind; and its blindness is superlative because it believes it has the power of sight. The world would not be half so blind if it could be taught that it cannot see.

About the feet of these ancient women there are strewn many empty shells. And when the world's feet crunch upon these, it

feels sure they are the refuse of some purchase. But who can believe so plain a fact? Its plainness should prove to us that it is there in order that the simple may be deceived.

One of the signs which should make us think is the secret love which little children have for the Willick Woman. The Willick Woman is a storer of secrets. What she sees with her eyes she hides away, and that which is spoken she remembers. Her wisdom comes from the East, where the earth grows angry in conflict with the sun; and because her shells are built like a king's tomb, she has for her own some of the lore of the Nile. But her chief wisdom was taught to the Masseer by the priests of Babilu; and the Masseer carried it in its great salmon-soul down to the ocean, just as the flood dried into pools in its wake. It spread round the world, that is the underwater world, and tentacled watchers of the greater deep smiled when they heard it, and ceased to wave their sucker-studded arms. And they laughed up at the folly of man as his ships passed like shadows on the grey roof of the waters. And when great whales came down to prey upon

them, they would clasp the vast monsters in their arms, and struggle for a space so that there might be stillness. And in the higher world timid crayfish and the small finned dorys, who keep close to the rocks, whispered to each other the proverb of the sea: "There is always still water below the fiercest storm."

The Willick Women are always old, and each has an over-grown son who disguises himself as a newsboy or affects the splendid profession of the loafer. It is a law with the Willick Woman that she must never gather her own shells; so her son goes out into the shadows, before toilers are astir, and creeps down the long Shore Road. He himself only guesses vaguely the greatness of his mission; and it is well that it should be so. He walks bent over the sand, and scales great stones clear of periwinkles. Sometimes he sings below his breath a song that appears always strange to him, as though he had heard it in a dream. Then when the sun is risen, the over-grown son of the Willick Woman comes home with two great gleaming cans, full of the shell-bound mystery of the sea.

At the door his mother receives him; and

then it is permitted him to sleep a heavy sleep, well earned, or he may go forth to loiter upon the great streets or sell what men believe to be printed truth. But he must not remain at home to watch the mysteries. He cannot be a Willick Man, for there is none such. Willick Women are always old, and that is because when a Willick Woman is in fear of death she chooses some ancient lady who tends her to bear her secret.

When her over-grown son has gone or is asleep, the Willick Woman pours a stream of the shellfish into a steaming black pot; and then, motionless, she watches while countless activities are ended, and the white vapour of the soulless rises heavenwards. For her that act is something great accomplished. There is before her the calmness and repose of a slain-strewn field of war. Each well armed periwinkle is at peace. For a time her brain is active, and she can read human destinies in the victorious vapour that rises from a bubbling and rattling cauldron of shells. Perhaps it may be that she sees a purpose beyond the range of her mysteries. The cowrie shell is the coin of Africa; the metal coin is the

god of the West. But those who cannot bow down to this elusive god, can make for themselves gods of the cowrie shell on the shore of civilisation.

Then when all is done, the hot shells are spread upon some convenient surface, and afterwards placed in a great can. If the over-grown son is dutiful he can now be sighted from the door, ready to attend upon his mother. For it is now she goes forth; and with her she takes a seat for herself and a box upon which the tray of treasures can rest. Then, whether her son attend her or not, she becomes invisible, and that which is with her also. For no man has seen the Willick Woman upon her journey. In the mind of the world, she exists merely in a state of repose before her pyramid of shells, which truly gives wisdom to the thoughtless. And that is because there is no task which calls for so much concentration as the extraction, with a pin, of a boiled periwinkle from its shell. Therefore the Willick Woman is the benefactor of the poor. She teaches the secret of concentration; and there is no earthly height to which those who learn her lesson truly may not rise.

## THE RENT MAN.



HERE is nowhere to be found such a compound character. In reality he is the mildest and most engaging of creatures: but once he has slung his bullion bag over his shoulder, he becomes charged with that quality which is expressed in the word "bounce."

His half-dreamy yet determined facial expression is moulded and improved in many a fight until he reaches the perfect type; and then the smallest infant will recognise him as the hereditary foe.

He faces imposture, impertinence, penury, and violence with the same injured immobility, and does not betray his interior struggle to retain his dignity even by the flutter of an eyelash.

In clothing he resembles a sporting undertaker, because he inclines towards the more solemn serges, cases his calves in leggings, wears a bookie's cash-bag, and

generally protects his throat from microbes by a drop-scene moustache.

As an authority on black eyes, Hinde's curlers, half-open doors, and the actual state of the family finance, he is without a rival; yet he looks upon these phenomena with cold, scientific disdain.

He can avoid collision with young cats, puppy-dogs, babies, and May Queens quite as cleverly as a sea captain can avoid collision with buoys and lightships.

He can examine a broken window, whose immediate repair he has no intention of effecting, with an almost loving regard, as though he would gladly exchange his own air-tight apartments for a room so naturally ventilated. Drains and dripping spouts he dwells upon with admiration, as though, all things considered, they were much better to be out of order. Everything, in fact, is sweet to his nostrils; and he treats virtue and vice alike with cold impartiality.

Behind him there crowd the phantoms of the law, ready to materialise at his command; and his life is spent in threatening people who know the exact limit of his patience and power.

Curbstone children gaze up at this

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perambulating bank with reverence and strictly professional dislike, for he is the conqueror of each coin-swept street through which he passes.

There is about him something of the grind of machinery, for he is a cog-wheel, at whose removal the world-engine would, for a time at any rate, become motionless.

The Rent Man has unequalled opportunities for observing human nature, but unfortunately his eyes see little else besides coins and rent-books.



## THE RAG, BONE, AND BALLOON MAN.



CHILDREN secretly love the man who comes roaring up the street, with his handcart of cast-off clothes and bones and bottles and empty jam-pots.

They adore him because of the cord cage, suspended from a pole above the cart, in which glistening balloons in bondage sway and flutter and rush all of a heap to one side, as though they were determined to free themselves.

He is willing to exchange these air-balls for the horrible things with which he likes to fill his cart; or if offered a penny he will yield a balloon without demanding a boiled bone or a jam-pot. He is very obliging and very noisy, and altogether a very wonderful person. There is about him something of the deliverer of Hamelin; indeed one might reasonably suspect that he is the Pied Piper wandering in fear of

the police, because for his sake children leave their play and follow him down one street and up another, until they find themselves in a new country, and have to inquire the way home again. Perhaps there are children who follow him all the way! Perhaps he really has a cavern for his journey's end, that opens to greet him, and closes when he has entered. And perhaps he rises very early in the morning and gathers his balloons, which may really be eggs from some fairy farmyard, left for him by the fairies in exchange for the horrible rags and bones and jam-pots he has brought from the town. It may be his mission to take away the ugly things and bring back what is beautiful.

But whoever he may be, no town would be complete without him; and no person can deny that he is full of mystery. Sensible, every-day people will agree that in habits he is certainly very like a comet, because no one seems to be able to say whence he came or whither he is going, or what he really intends to do with the queer things he takes with him. He seems to "swim" into our "ken" and out again before we have time to discover his real

intentions. It is quite possible that the noise he makes is intended to distract our gaze from the balloons lest we should suspect what they really are. And those who have watched him will recollect that he sometimes varies his methods by bringing no balloons at all, probably through sheer cleverness or because he has had some dispute at the source of supply. And on such occasions he manufactures—where, nobody knows—wonderful wall-paper mats, fire-screens and fans, and windmills that fly round until we begin to fear that they may stop through sheer exhaustion! And he always chooses papers of such splendid colour that from a distance his cart looks like some giant paint-box in the throes of creation.

The wonderful thing about him, and about nearly all the other traders of the street, is that they are, as a class, frightfully old. Each generation accepts these marvels without suspecting that they are the gifts of a previous generation, and that they have been passed on as the heirlooms of democracy for centuries. There is an unailing test by which their antiquity can be proved: any institution that inspires

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secret affection is sure to be as old as the hills. And the most hard-hearted person living has a place in the still unfrozen corner of his heart for the rag, bone and balloon man.

## THE FISH MAN.



HERE is probably no one who is so absorbed by his trade as the fish-man. That is partly because he makes such a strange sound; but there are other reasons. He goes singing his wonderful chant of the ocean down prosaic street and mathematically designed square. And as he goes he carries a little world with him. There is romance in his movement, which is always swift and sure, and in his song, always the same, which he utters over and over again, with an occasional inclination to repeat one phrase more than another. What he sings is—"Fresh her'n, fresh her'n, fresh her'n"; and then lower, to himself almost, and if by chance they hear, to the world of foolish people that swarms about him—"All alive!"

Like all the wonders of the cities, he is best understood by little children. They

suspect his mystery; they know him as a messenger, no mere slave of commerce. He is wonderful for them. There is a doubt about his origin, and there is a greater doubt about his destiny. No one ever saw the fish-man begin his day of song, because his day never ends. He carries curious treasures, and he is full of wisdom. His garments cling about him, and his eyes are guarded from the light. No man can tell his age, and he is without kith and kin in the world. And with suddenness he comes upon us, seemingly eager to barter what his basket holds for coins, but really as one laden with great secrets, who must seem to be human, and who must pursue his journey rapidly, but never appear to be in haste.

It is not chance which makes nurses fill the brains of little drowsy people with the tale that the fish-man is a sort of hobgoblin who will "come" for them if they cry.

He calls of herrings; but half his truth slips when he says "alive"; and we grasp the whole secret if we have eyes to see the meaning of the strange flatness of his baskets, and how the sides come together at the place where the handle begins. It

is truly the most mysterious basket into which anyone could look; and it can hide so much.

He tells you that what he carries is alive; but that cannot be if he carries only fish.

Those who are wise—that is, the little children—know him as a sad and wonderful man, sometimes dressed like a sailor, who seems to be engaged upon great business. They stop their play when he passes; they gaze after him, but they never follow him. And truly they are wise. For the fish-man seldom stops; and little feet soon grow very weary.

But there is another reason why they do not follow him. Those who are wise—but not so wise as little children—know that the fish-man has real dealings with those who lure fish from the sea. But they do not know perhaps that when a fish is taken from the sea there is room for something just of the same size, and just as foreign to the world of air and sunlight and flowers. The fish-man knows this. He learned it years ago before the Sphinx was carved. He heard the secret from dark-skinned galley-men, whose ships were stained with rich dye, and who came from the end of

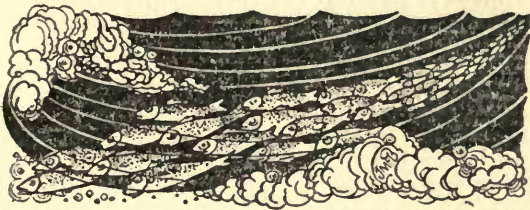
the world bringing treasure and ornaments and woven silks to the sad and cruel cities. The fish-man had often heard the cry of frightened children, and the dropping of great human tears when sorrow was peering into the eyes of the desolate. And the fish-man had a heart—which is a very uncommon thing—so he used to sit under the diamond-crusted sky which seemed so hard and so far away. It was while he sat thinking that quite suddenly there came into his mind the idea that he might put the secret he had learned to splendid use. And so he asked the galley-men to tell him again what they had told him before, so that there might be no mistake. And what they told him was just what he felt sure would make the world happy.

Sorrow seemed to him a thing entirely out of place in the world, a cruel and horrible thing like the cruel and horrible things of the sea! And so he gathered many fish in a net, and wove curious baskets that might cling to him, and whose sides might almost close together at the top. And into the world of sorrow he came with his burden.

From those who took his fish he accepted



payment. But when he saw a sorrow he would put it in his basket; and when he heard a sigh he would take it, and press the top of his basket so that it could not escape. And all the while he would sing the old Perizzitian words:—"F'reshun ololiev," which of course means "Happiness unspoiled." He seldom walked in the streets of great houses; but passed among the poor, where there is so much trouble. And sometimes his baskets would be laden down with things full of dread so that he could scarcely bring them to the shore, and sink them in the water to fill the places from which the fish had been taken. Nothing made him so sad as to return seawards with the fish he had brought to the city. He has never ceased to toil since he made his first basket; and that is why little children stop their cry when they hear the song of the fish-man.



## THE SOUL OF SMITHFIELD.<sup>1</sup>



IN this city of commercial success there is something that has remained successful. We have a treasure in our midst, which, in the battle of bricks, lies unprotected and ready to be ruined. Though built like a gridiron, it is no relic of municipal torturer's activity: here has been no crackling of creed-cases. But it has come to us from the past, delicate and full of dust.

How much the aesthetic value of Smithfield owes to the Smithfield of the Saxon deserves to be discovered.

Venturesome strangers are accustomed to return and declare that they have seen merely a covered market. But we who are wise know better.

It is here we go in the days of our

<sup>1</sup>An ancient, low-built market. One of the few remaining relics of old Belfast, built when the city possessed a character and national sentiment quite unlike those which at present distinguish it.

adversity, rising early from our beds, so that we may have courage to ask a little more when the breath of the morning is damp and the purchasers are few!

The inhabitants of this strange land are a peculiar people. Wise ones have offered, with eagerness, legal proof that some of them have died. But the evidence has invariably been too convincing; and we prefer to believe that they have always lived. For in the breaking of their ranks the Jew must have picked his place. Yet here the Gentile out-Hebrews Herod; and the unprotected pig could soon be salted.

In Smithfield there is a soul which modifies whatever drifts down its waterless ways. The rancid rubbish of our modern world is transformed. The appealing nun,<sup>2</sup> innocent only of having ever entered a nunnery, shocks us but slightly, for here she gains a little of that art value which the whole history of our modern world has caused to attach itself to the profession of prevarication. Those bold books which tell of the gay life their writers never lived are here become for us merely part of the street-dust and stench of noble cities. And

<sup>2</sup> "Maria Monk" books and other unclean booklets.

the books which one never sees in human habitation are, in Smithfield, so modest as to be clothed in cords. They are trussed in this manner lest, by their falling open, Smithfield should be shocked.

Here, among the sombre outpourings<sup>3</sup> of silent houses whose owners are asleep, there slumbers the music<sup>4</sup> of this marvellous land, to be awakened only by a vision of royalty.<sup>5</sup> And then, for a space, delirious dances, songs, and slender, half-born melodies ooze into the old sharp ears of our so active Sphinx.<sup>6</sup> But there is no shuffling of feet; heads do not turn; and even he who has offered a stipend to this minister of mirth slips into the shadows and is lost.<sup>7</sup>

In Smithfield all things are for sale, yet nothing has been known to change,<sup>8</sup> so that those who buy must go back at a safe

<sup>3</sup> The contents of the second-hand furniture stalls.

<sup>4</sup> An ancient automatic spinet which plays for a penny.

<sup>5</sup> A penny.

<sup>6</sup> Smithfield.

<sup>7</sup> The "music" of the automatic spinet is of such a surprising kind that the man who has started it usually looks very sheepish, and disappears.

<sup>8</sup> My own experience and that of any people whom I have questioned is that Smithfield has always looked the same, even to the smallest detail.

season and set their purchase in its place again.

Here we find William of Orange beside Robert Emmet, the "Police News" and the "Key of Heaven," the sneering Ingersoll upon the "Pilgrim's Progress."<sup>9</sup>

Here whoso follows his inclinations may find for himself the triple throne of democracy set over against the cabinet of the capitalist.

Once there was a migration. Birds that had been stolen from the sky were cunningly displayed for sale.<sup>10</sup> And Smithfield smiled; for it knew that those who are to make the market their home must come willingly. And this smile had scarcely faded before the birds were bundled upon a cart, like so much fluttering furniture, and the Sphinx was left alone to her sparrows and those songsters whose piping may be purchased for a penny.<sup>11</sup> But

<sup>9</sup> Smithfield is the only place in Belfast where political and religious views do not seem to clash.

<sup>10</sup> About eight years ago an attempt was made by a dealer in birds to set up a successful bird stall in Smithfield; but it proved a failure, and he left within about two months, and set up business in Gresham Street.

<sup>11</sup> The owner of the automatic spinet has a pair of stuffed birds in gilt cages that sing when a penny is put in the slot.

though the birds could not be kept, their seller had been caught in the coils of this strange siren; and his shop is to be seen on one of those sudden avenues that stretch from this amazing storehouse.

In Smithfield there is a glorious goblin,<sup>12</sup> like some undertaker shrouding souls as well as corpses, who emerges from licensed caverns and spreads out before him a splendid spoil. He is Smithfield's king; and wears upon his head a sable spout. He is one of those who have been lured from the land of sensible and prosperous ones; but that was in the dim days that the oldest have forgotten. He is very beautiful, because his face has been dyed with weasels' blood. And before him he gathers garments of questionable quality, soiled and exquisitely splattered, while round him there rise glorious gnomes,<sup>13</sup> who presently seize upon such things as they desire, and add them to the piles that never grow smaller.

<sup>12</sup>The soiled clothes auctioneer, whose family had gained wealth and position in the city, while he remained spending his leisure in public-houses. He had a huge nose on a rather small face, and always wore an exceedingly tall silk hat.

<sup>13</sup>Stout old women who keep retail soiled clothes stalls in Smithfield, and who sit in a ring round the auctioneer.

## THE SOUL OF SMITHFIELD. 27

In Smithfield, amid the wreckage of castle and cottage, there sit stout ladies of noble lineage,<sup>14</sup> disguised in print garments. Patiently they sit as they have sat for centuries, while little children come in and stare at them, and escape down those cross-passages which were made for such sudden retreats.

Smithfield is cunning and subtle; for it sets a face to the world that speaks of novelty and brightness. To the waves of the city it offers a sea-wall<sup>15</sup> of tinsmiths, and an unlicensed League-room,<sup>16</sup> where the famished are filled, and rich simmering joys are given to the good. Behind the barrier there sits the Sphinx. Even the deceiving surface reveals the spirit which it covers.

In Smithfield it is a law that the only things which may change are those that are not for sale: the peep-show passed, and there came the revolving view, and now the Mutoscope remains for its little moment, ready to be dethroned.

<sup>14</sup> The second-hand furniture dealers.

<sup>15</sup> Smithfield on the outer side is to all appearances a row of low-built shops.

<sup>16</sup> A coffee stand under the management of the Irish Temperance League, where broth is sold.

But though Smithfield modifies all that comes under its roof, it is itself modified by those things which in the world of change have cared to copy it. There is the Selfridge<sup>17</sup> of Smithfield, sprawling with whim-supplying prosperity, and smiling behind a door of glass which is to decoy those who are searching for a shop. But when inside, how great is the gain; and how splendid it is to feast one's eyes upon the treasures that are spread upon every hand.

One of the secrets of Smithfield is that in it new things are made:<sup>18</sup> barrels are built, tools turned, saws sharpened until they feel young again, all but the Celestial Keys are cut, and that which is true and false decided<sup>19</sup>—for here Law sits upon a humble throne, and justice is done to the man whose weights are true. But this activity is one of the internal disguises of the Sphinx. And we who are wise know that that which seems new is as old as the world.

<sup>17</sup> A large store, entered through an ordinary shop front, but which is merely a door to a great variety of stalls, all of which, however, are most painfully up-to-date in appearance.

<sup>18</sup> Quite a number of trades find their place in Smithfield.

<sup>19</sup> The Government Inspector of weights and measures has his office in Smithfield.



## THE SOUL OF SMITHFIELD. 29

Smithfield has its sentinels<sup>20</sup> and skirmishers;<sup>21</sup> it has its gates and its guard; it is as a walled city whose battlements are reared to heaven so that its virtue may remain inviolate. And to this day the Curfew chimes the closing of its gates and the extinction of its fires; and then, dark and full of slumbers, it spreads out beneath the Ulster skies.

It has also its secret service.<sup>22</sup> For when the sun has struggled from his bed, and strangers enter the gates, the spies of Smithfield enter also. They are disguised as strangers, and look with splendid eager eyes at the glories that are to be sold. But they do not buy; and the strangers do not steal! To assist them there are the sentinels who strut behind the stalls;<sup>23</sup> and these are commanded by the chief of the guard,<sup>24</sup> with his uniform and authority.

But the skirmishers<sup>25</sup> of Smithfield are the strangest soldiers of all. They patrol

<sup>20</sup> The Market officials of the Corporation.

<sup>21</sup> The men who visit the suburbs to buy old clothes.

<sup>22</sup> Quite a small army of people are employed to loiter near the stalls and act as private detectives, or as salesmen.

<sup>23</sup> Ordinary salesmen.

<sup>24</sup> The Municipal officer attached to Smithfield Market.

<sup>25</sup> The buyers of old clothes, boots, &c., who depart each morning for the suburbs armed with black bags.

the purlieus of plutocracy, armed with bags and blandishments. They see to it that Smithfield is supplied; and wage war upon the wardrobes of the wealthy, knowing well that the name of Smithfield will prevent the bravest of the spoiled from following after them to secure again what the Sphinx has made her own.

Within the walls there are many mysterious bins; and it is said that they contain stores against a siege. But the wise ask no questions; for strange tales are whispered of how, when a bin was opened centuries ago, it was found to be full of curious skeletons.

One there is in Smithfield who gathers about him the scum of our sphere: crutches and corset-busts, turbines and teapots, sewing-machines and Salvation Army tambourines, weigh-bridges and whet-stones, yard-rules, and Yule-logs, zithers and Zulu-shields. And beside him there are strange old men who stew before stoves, and draw about them tyres and tubes.<sup>26</sup>

In Smithfield there are drawers that have drifted from their drawer-holes in cabinet and chest; and there are spoiled mirrors

<sup>26</sup> Cycle tyre merchants.

that are said to have reflected the features of faithless ones, for even as we look into them they lie!

Once in the grand days when Smithfield was strong, and the city that clusters about it small, players were drawn to its doors, and actors of note strutted and smiled.<sup>27</sup> And though the theatres are no more, the actors, who should long since have died, remain like moths upon some ancient web, living while it lives.<sup>28</sup> They were famous ones, some of these; and are to be found drifting in great solitude, struck to stone, as it were, while they played, and still abroad in the dresses of the stage.

In Smithfield, breathing as it does the majestic maxim, "Man know thyself,"<sup>29</sup> we have a storehouse of splendours, for the loss of which nothing could compensate this city of success.

<sup>27</sup> There were, some sixty years ago, three theatres in Smithfield Market at one time, and some of the best actors of the day played in one of them.

<sup>28</sup> One meets the most extraordinary people in Smithfield, who resemble some petrified thing of a past age.

<sup>29</sup> A repulsive semi-medical book which is displayed, and usually tied with cord so that it cannot be perused, on nearly all the bookstalls in Smithfield.

## THAT WHICH IS CALLED JOHNSTON.



**N** this city of success there is a fearful and wonderful mystery. It is stranger than the Willick Woman, and Smithfield could not contain it. For it is more mysterious than Smithfield.

When the day is on its death-bed, and the hands by which man holds time in his grasp are almost raised to heaven in surrender, this mystery cometh forth.

It glitters over the Chapel Fields, spewing sparks into the night, and drawn, as a royal car, by a she ass that seems always to slumber. It is a chariot full of fire, driven by one in white; and behind him, over the iron-shielded flame, are cauldrons of boiling fat; and beside his feet is a secret oven of steam. A canopy covers his chariot; and from the canopy there swings a lantern of the sea. There is a pole at his right hand, to which a bunch of mysterious parchments

is bound with cords. But the world is very blind; and for the world this splendid mystery was named *The Hotel de Movealong*, by one whose soul grinned for a moment and sank into slumber.

Were any to seek for this mystery, he must inquire from such as walk the streets of this city of success, and whose eyes are blind; and to them he should say:—"Tell me, I pray you, where the chip and fish cart of one Johnston may be found?"

And peradventure such as answered him might declare that a man never sold sweeter chips or more delectable fish—no sordid and batter-enclosed flat-fish; but smokies, innocent and under-grown children of the haddock from Findon, on the red coast of Stonehaven. And he might be told that this Johnston belonged to the sect of the Salvationists, and that he served his chips and fish upon half sheets of the *War Cry*. And that would be true, if we measure truth according to the standard of the world, which is blind. He might be told that, as one of the Salvationists, Johnston never gave forth a curse; and that cunning ones oftentimes would, with stealth, drive a pin into the latter end of the she ass, causing

her to awaken and start forward, so that Johnston would, of a sudden, sit flat upon the hot iron roof of his range, and close his lips upon an oath.

Those who had waited for the dawn would say that when Johnston departed he left behind him a litter of fish-bones and forgotten chips; and that, at the noise of his departing wheels, cats without number, who had pondered all night long, would descend from roofs and come forth from laneways, and make a pavement of fur until nothing remained.

Those who had eaten of Johnston's chips and fish would swear that never before had such delights entered their mouths. Yea, the scribe himself shall give worldly testimony that from the depths of a great college, one learned in philosophy and theology was lured by him to eat of Johnston's delicate food; and that for once, a prince of the blood was presented by him so to feast, and astonished Johnston with a strange tongue and a coat of sumptuous fur. This is the world's story. It is true for the world; but the world is blind.

Johnston is the only mystery which little children do not understand; because little

children are asleep when he comes forth. They know the Willick Woman; they are wise in the lore of the Fish-Man; Smithfield spreadeth her mysteries before their feet; but Johnston, so long as they are little children, hideth himself from them. And because his mystery is hidden even from little children, who alone are perfectly wise, Johnston is the greatest of all mysteries in this city of success.

Let him who has disclosed the secret of the Willick Woman confess; let him who has followed the Fish-Man make known that Johnston is greater, yea, less understandable, than they.

One there is who sells chips and fish; and if any should inquire of him whether Johnston is abroad, he will answer:—  
“Johnston is dead.”

Men who think themselves wise will declare that he desires to entice away those who would be customers of Johnston, and that the spirit of competition lurks in this lie. Yet here is the key:—This man, who would seem to compete, is but a stander on the threshold. As the world knows it, Johnston is dead, inasmuch as the “stone cat of the desert” is dead!

And of Johnston, what shall we say?

Who is this that cometh forth in the darkness to the streets of Arthur and Chichester? Who is this that spreadeth tubers from the earth, and fish stolen from the sea, which have been smoked in secret, upon the pages of salvation? Who is this that refuseth an oath, and giveth forth no oracle? He is clad in white like the dead, and hath the peace of snowfields upon him. He draweth all unto himself; yea, whosoever hath tasted at his hand must return. He draweth men, yea, strange women, men of war, and such as return empty from games of chance, they that are an hungered, and they to whom spirits are denied; and afterwards he vanisheth; and goeth unto his couch with the rising sun. The darkness is as day unto him; and lest men should speak, and by questioning comprehend his mystery, their mouths are stopped, and their stomach-souls are satisfied. He useth the sheets of salvation for a platter; and men feel themselves, as it were, enticed; and come to him swearing that they cannot resist his charm. He asketh of them but one question:—"When



shalt thou come hither again?" And none can answer him; for that is his riddle.

Who are his satellites? Who are they that watch over him? Cats without number! And lest his secret should remain until the dawn, these children and ministers of the sphinx devour that which his bounty has bestowed, or which the blind and careless ones of the world have cast aside. None may dare to name him. He cometh from the desert; and to the desert he returns. His resting-place is beside the pyramids. And it shall come to pass that when this city of success hath crumbled, and the mountains of Blackness look down upon desolation, there shall remain among the ruins two mysteries: a fire which burneth in the night behind the eyes of the sphinx, and the Willick Woman before her pyramid of shells.

The Willick Woman holdeth the PYRAMID in daylight; and that which is called Johnston is the GREATER MYSTERY of the Desert.

## MONSIEUR AMONG THE MUSHROOMS.

### A "Modern" Philosopher at Large.

*Note.*—Much that is possibly incomprehensible in "Monsieur Among the Mushrooms" will be plain if those who may be puzzled will consult an illustrated book on mushrooms. Even the small and picturesque sixpenny volume, "Mushrooms" by Somerville Hastings, F.R.C.S., published by Gowans and Gray, of Glasgow, will prove to the most critical student of this book that in the various growths of the mushroom family every feature of the human body has been reproduced, and that the symbol of eternity, the circle, is written plainly upon our meadows by this extraordinary plant.

The mushroom family is by far the largest in the world, for it includes Bacteria, and the growths which we find on jam, and the remarkable *Tubina Cylindrica*, which is neither a pure vegetable or an animal, but seems to be a little of both; while the human brain is exactly reproduced by the *Caryne sarcoides*.

To maintain the format of this book, the very elaborate footnotes which accompanied "Monsieur" in the pages of *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record* for May, 1915, have been omitted. But those who are inclined to treat "Monsieur" lightly as a thinker would do well to consult the original article.

#### I.



MONSIEUR was an extremely active little man, whose activity appeared to be of no value whatever. His nose, which was his most striking feature, seemed by its shape to suggest that

it desired to escape from his face. His ears were so peculiarly small that one could scarcely have been excused for exhibiting surprise had they suddenly disappeared inwards. His eyes were wide and full of astonishment, as though for him this world provided an endless panorama of surprises.

He was a small man, round and swollen, so round, indeed, as to prevent taller people from bestowing that superior patronage upon him which causes such pleasurable sensations in the bestower. As to dress, he possessed ideas of his own.

"We should reflect, and never obtrude," he said not infrequently. "And if we are to find anything we must begin by losing ourselves."

He had perfected, after considerable expense, a somewhat elaborate sartorial colour scheme. And his clothes, even to his socks, were capable of presenting, on being turned inside-out, a second shade. In this matter he was scrupulously consistent; for after tramping along a dusty road in raiment entirely adapted to the colour of the dust, so that he appeared merely as a rather solid cloud, he would effect the turning inside-out of his garments

on some suitable spot, between the macadam and the grass, and finally enter the domain of green as verdant as the freshest blade beneath his feet.

And how perfect a philosophy was his! with harmony as its object and the natural world as its analogy. Why, even in the artificial there was the expression of his theory: the very dust of the road was absorbed by its surroundings, so that none should say where the track began and where it ended. Did not the sea reflect the sky, and the grass the grasshopper? Had not the flowers taken their colours from the rainbow when their eyes were damp with gratitude for rain? And surely their backs had become green by gazing at the grass? Did not the snowdrop take its purity from the snow? and the sweep his blackness from the soot? But it were unwise to delay the dreadful truth. The analogy of the pantry was destined to be smashed in the scullery.

And who shall smile as he contemplates the dismay with which Monsieur discovered his *cul-de-sac*? There it lay at his feet, a displeasing and unashamed destroyer of theories. There, with its corpse-like head and hideously human pinkness beneath;

the growth of an hour that would spurn the centuries; a puff-ball paradox; the flower that blooms in darkness, and turns the pallor of death to the daylight, and the pink of health to the verdure through which it obtrudes itself!

And as, for Monsieur, all things in nature, with one exception, obeyed the laws of harmony and reflection, that one exception must be more powerful than all nature. So it was that among the mushrooms Monsieur believed he might find that for which as a philosopher he sought. Yet, how should so diverse a congregation be gathered together, save by the pursuit of spores, small and great, yellowish-brown or purplish-black, into the very stomach of the earth. And in such a pursuit how many would be the chances of self-enrichment for evilly-disposed persons, whose lives were spent in tending that which Monsieur so much desired.

Monsieur, in his eagerness to select and acquire, dived into the earth, and toiled through tunnels which had once enclosed fiery and roaring monsters of iron, but which were now silent mortuaries of the mushroom. Indeed, that in itself was

another proof of the truth upon which our philosopher had stumbled : for did not the silence of these underground chambers testify to the displacement of noise and steam-begotten force by that which in nature was proved all-powerful by its isolation ?

Here it was that Monsieur learned how the mushroom might be persuaded to grow ; and here it was that for many days he toiled unobserved, appropriately attired in black, with a light heart and a somewhat lightened purse. And in those first, fresh, active days he found time even to press his theory upon others, as a physic to be received in small measures, while the giver retains something, if it even be the bottle. And so it came that, in a little while, there arose a respectful company of believers.

“How great, indeed,” Monsieur would exclaim, “is the mushroom ! It has claimed the round world for its habitation : and when man rears his cities of stone it demands of him that even in the heart of cities it shall be given space to express itself in silence.”

There was the world itself to be considered. For presently it put its claw

into its own stomach, where Monsieur and his disciples were digesting wisdom, and demanded to know the reason for an æsthetic appreciation of a commodity interesting only for its commercial value. And Monsieur, dragged into daylight, expostulating vigorously, and infuriated at the incongruity of his attire, the reverse side of which was shaded in harmony with the Belfast atmosphere at that particular season, could hardly be considered a happy exponent of the transcendental. How indeed should ravings and grumblings and half-expressed anathemas, strung as beads upon a thread of truth, which was to lead men safely from their present intellectual labyrinth, seem in any sort different from the wisdom of those whom the world had, *ex abundantia cautela*, set aside in strong houses?

Here, indeed, were the materials for a most undignified martyrdom; and with disciples enough to encourage the soul in distress, yet unwilling to interfere in the business of the executioner or to occupy the centre of the stage. Learned and serious ones of the world were assembled quickly, and Monsieur arraigned as an

*emigré*, who had proved traitor to the "universal consciousness" by setting up a standard of intelligence which depended for its rectitude merely upon the vigour of his expostulation.

And who can forget the genial and superior smile which rested upon the faces of his judges? The mushroom was the all-powerful exception! Just so. Who could doubt it? But for such as believed in it there had been made complete provision. The exception might be right; but they preferred the universal law of harmony to remain unbroken. Prove his exception, and law itself should cease. How, then, could Monsieur object to illustrate that law by joining those who differed from the world on some small matters?

"But how," exclaimed Monsieur, "shall I make progress in my investigation?"

He was assured with gentleness that, even though placed *extra muros*, he should have "every facility," "ample scope," and that, above all, he might hope to be well again.

"But to what end?" he interrupted.

"In order," it was explained to him,



“that you may be in harmony with the majority.”

“Why, then,” he demanded, “shall we not drown ourselves, and be in harmony with the unnumbered things of the sea?” And afterwards, with dignity, as one expounding the unspeakable: “But the majority here are mushrooms! Man, their toy, is nowhere. It is he who is *extra muros!*”

So that being said, the company of learned and serious ones was scattered, and Monsieur introduced to a state of life with which he was unfamiliar.

Here, indeed, was a Daniel dragged to Bedlam; and Bedlam itself a hive of masonry, ringed by a huge wall. Within were the courts of princes and all the kings of the earth, aliened for a time, but surely to come again into their kingdoms. Here were sages and dreamers, poets and those who saw visions; some who possessed the gold of the Indies, yet strutted in rags because the rulers of the house denied them liberty. Holders of secrets there were who whispered in corners that which could shake a throne. Wise men, too, who knew all things; and when a revelation was

almost uttered, realised on a sudden that none could be worthy of it, and feigned to forget. Here were energy beyond belief, activity, serious purposes.

And into the midst of these wonders Monsieur was projected, his brain bowed beneath a weight of budding theories. So active was he in sorting and labelling his mental treasures that for the first days of his captivity he accepted the mechanical attentions of his keepers, and said nothing of the procession of wonders that passed down the highway of his soul.

Vainly had those who believed in him exerted their whispering powers at a hundred age-holes in the walls, and in vain had one of them torn a garment of green in the embraces of a similarly tinted tree. Most surely the prophet slumbered while the sons of the prophet strove to release him from his prison.

But how rich were these days for Monsieur. No longer in contact with the material mushroom, he was able to contemplate it dispassionately and to realise at a distance its magnitude. But what need was there that he should struggle to escape? Better remain at rest, and leave the place

when it pleased him. For with his knowledge of the mushroom he was all-powerful. Behind the material which witnessed to a supremely strong exception, there was the energy of mind that drove and guided, swept aside and conquered. And in the mushroom itself there was unity without contact. The mushroom was, indeed, a giant body torn and strewn over the earth. There was the fungus of the hair. There was that which, by its shape, clearly proved the existence of brain. There was a form which made certain that the egg was the origin of that which it contained. There was the manifestation of that which generates. And there was a growth which appertained to the lower animals. There were many things besides: the star-like eyes, from which the sun and moon derived their radiance; the great masses of body and limb; the fingers and the features; the mouth that devoured. There was the warrior from whose wounds blood could flow. There was that which indicated the cellular structure of the human body, and indeed of all living things. And yet all this was incalculably strong, and all this was inexplicably united.

There was more than human power; for was not there material dust that might blind a pursuer?

How poor a thing man appeared, after all, compared with the mushroom that could set its seal upon man's food, and say: "That is mine!"—grasp a tree in its embrace, make the forest its own, lay its fingers on the fields; encompass eternity indeed, and set bounds upon the dances of the dead.

How could Monsieur fear with so great a power to befriend him? He was in peace, and should he not continue in peace as long as it pleased him?

But there were some who thought differently. To the world of those skilled in potions and cures, Monsieur was in no wise to be left alone. He, being a novelty, must be acquired; books must be born of him; reputations raised, or at least sustained! and to that end it became necessary that he should reveal all that was in his heart. Monsieur had certainly spoken before the learned and serious ones who had sat in judgment upon him; therefore he would talk to those who should come to grow wiser by watching him.

But Monsieur was silent, and smiled upon any who questioned him. Once, indeed, he said :

“ Unless I am left alone, I shall leave you. It is now my pleasure to remain. It may, however, please me to depart ! ”

Subtle ones there were, who professed to understand ; and such came to him secretly, pretending that they believed in him ; and of these he would inquire :

“ What is the noblest thing ? ”

“ The mushroom, ” they would answer.

“ Then become a mushroom if you would learn nobility. ”

Still wiser ones there were who lowered speaking-pipes into his chamber, in the hope that he might converse with himself. But into their pipes he would pour suitable oaths, and afterwards close them with corks of fungus.

Others, professing greater subtlety, served mushrooms with his meals, in the hope that they might induce him to speak ; but he would set the repast aside, and demand of those who waited upon him :

“ Wherefore do you set your superiors before me ? ”

It came about, therefore, that his keepers

D

were instructed to use what brains they possessed, and to remember as well as they could any chance words he might have to say. They must on no account permit him to observe them in the act of taking notes, and must interpose some convenient barrier between Monsieur and any literary operation which they might think fit to perform. They must neither exhibit interest in his conversation nor express surprise should he proceed to expound some astonishing or enlightening truth.

The mushroom-growing properties of the asylum plantation and the actual resources of the estate were carefully ascertained; and until the mushroom had been cultivated by artificial means, Monsieur was, at stated hours of the day, led to those spots where it flourished unaided by man.

To the satisfaction of the Governor a vigorous growth of fine puff-balls was discovered by chance in a thickly timbered portion of the estate; and thither Monsieur was at once conducted. Here, indeed, was a sight which filled him with enthusiasm. How certain an evidence of force beyond man's understanding. The artillery of the all-powerful; an arsenal packed to the roof

with powder. That was something upon which to feast the eyes. At the sight of it, indeed, Monsieur's eyes were seen to fill with tears; and when he had regained control of himself, he reverently plucked one of the precious globes and, walking to the boundary wall, flung it into the outer world. Afterwards, upon his knees, he contemplated that which he realised was to deliver him from bondage. But the time was not yet, and he must learn patience.

For a while he held converse with his beloved puff-balls; but a sudden rising to his feet revealed to him the absence of his keepers. There was a crackling of paper; and they emerged from behind trees. Then it was that he desired to see the Governor of the Asylum. Monsieur's wish should be granted as soon as the Governor had prepared himself for the interview. Much, indeed, had to be done. A writer of shorthand must be hidden behind some screen. The Governor was smarting under instructions from the compounders of potions and cures. He had been told to "take every precaution," to "let nothing slip," because the case of Monsieur was "quite unique," capable of yielding "much valuable data";

and, of course, it was of the "utmost importance" to "maintain the traditions" of the institution which, as one of the compounders said, "occupied an undisputed place in the forefront of mental research"; and the fact of the Governor having taken trouble would "redound to his credit." The Governor, therefore, played his part like a man. Long-stalked toad-stools replaced the flowers in his vases. The literature of mushrooms was strewn over his table. Pictures of mushrooms had been framed, and were even now taking the place of the more homely engravings on his walls. Nothing was left undone, because the Governor had been advised to "spare no expense." Most of the parlour chairs were removed in order that Monsieur might have space to examine the wonders which had been prepared for his admiration. An ancient piano-stool, with one leg, had been covered with white holland cloth, drawn hastily together with threads below the seat; in fact all had been done that imagination could suggest to persuade Monsieur to exhibit the peculiar symptoms of madness which made his case so attractive. When all was ready, and Monsieur



was permitted to enter, he surveyed the room, with a smile. Here, at least, he was at home! The Governor was the only human being visible; and Monsieur made haste to address him.

“Have they also assured you that you may hope to be well again?”

The Governor had not expected so complete an appreciation of his efforts.

“I have,” he said, “received no assurance of hope.”

“Do you, then, worship the mushroom?”

He had learned from Monsieur to admire it.

At that Monsieur, as was most natural, showed much satisfaction; and with a sweep of the arm, which was to indicate the unity of the apartment and its occupants, he possessed himself of the Governor's hand. For Monsieur was too good a philosopher to forget that man, as well as being himself, is that which surrounds him also.

“I place my thoughts before you,” he exclaimed. “Do we know all things?”

“I hope not,” said the Governor.

“It is possible, then, that we may know more! Who is there to deny that what I

have found may not be the true exception which proves the ruler?"

"I cannot follow you."

"That being so, remain at rest in your place, and, observe this," tearing a toadstool from a vase. "Here is that which denies the laws of harmony and reflection. Here is that which rears a death-head to the heavens, and shows pinkness to the soil; which resembles nothing in nature but that which is decaying. This thing, I declare to you, is stronger than that which obeys, and therefore it is the master."

This expression of the unspeakable was terminated by an explosion. A sneeze from the writer of shorthand found Monsieur, with the energy of an avalanche, precipitated against a screen, and afterwards rebounding with righteous fury upon the Governor.

"Hirer of spies! Betrayer!" poured from Monsieur's mouth. And after that, still spluttering with disgust, he was led gently away.

## II.

It was upon the day following his visit to the Governor that Monsieur saw one of those who believed in him. He was upon

his daily pilgrimage to the plantation of puff-balls, when he stumbled upon a single mushroom of great size, below the boundary-wall. Here was another deliverer! What should Monsieur do but crouch upon the soil beside it? This was a strange mushroom, for upon its death-head was inscribed a message:

“We shall wait for you night and day. Having found this, pluck it up and cast it over the wall where your believers await you.”

Monsieur, with reverence and care, examined this mushroom in masquerade. It was indeed a gauntlet flung up to nature! And where the root should have been there was a weighted spike; so that if this cunningly-devised engine were cast aloft it would descend and remain planted in the earth!

How much reason for joy! Here was evidence of strength, of conviction and energy. They whom he had instructed might yet lead him. For the present, at least, they should know that he still lived and loved them. So he concealed the cunningness of the mushroom, and at a convenient moment, flung it into the outer

world. While the messenger was yet in the air a strange presence, clothed in cardboard stones, and crowned with broken glass, rose above the wall, grinned upon Monsieur for a moment, and was gone.

"The season of my departure shall be near; and my time of detention must be persuaded to shorten itself," Monsieur muttered. And aloud: "I desire a bag in which to store those puff-balls that have reached maturity."

A bag was brought to him. It remained to be seen if there was sufficient of that which was to deliver him.

It was unfortunate that the silk hat of a Chairman of Committee should have been penetrated by the spike of a mushroom in masquerade. The accident could only be accounted for by the fact that he was directly beneath the messenger when it fell; but that discovery did not console him for a scarred scalp and an enforced attendance upon the purveyor of hats.

Monsieur and his mushrooms were the subject of a tropical debate in Committee; and finally Monsieur was dragged, perspir-

ing, from his puff-ball plantation, bearing a bag of mature powder in his arms.

The Chairman displayed his damages—the hat, and that which had penetrated it; and for Monsieur's comfort he lowered his head to expose the extent of the contusion wrought by the spike.

Monsieur was then requested to say whether he had thrown the masquerader. He had not; being engaged upon matters of great importance in the plantation of puff-balls.

Could he, then, explain why such inscribed missiles should descend upon the innocent.

After consideration, Monsieur declared that, speaking as a Determinist, it seemed clear to him that the spike and the skull were made to meet each other: the one being made and the other meat; because law in the material predicated law in the spiritual.

Could Monsieur, then, explain the inscription.

After consideration, Monsieur declared that, speaking as an Idealist, he could not trust himself to promise that the meaning

which the inscription might have for him could be communicable to another.

The missile was placed in his hands. Could he now say what the words upon it signified.

That, Monsieur thought, might be done in a century or so. The words were "night and day." "Night" suggested much: the closing of shops, the slumber of the respectable, the silences and the noises of the night, the swing of great bodies through the sky, the activity of those things which had rested through the heat of the day, and above all the growth of the superb exception—the mushroom that had proved the ruler!

Should he speak of the "day"? Not until he had spoken of the great conjunction—the amazing "and" that held "night" and "day" together, and bound them in a circle about the earth. How gigantic a conjunction! which in commerce joined the obvious to the mysterious: the man to his company!

Remove "and" from the world, and the marriage-tie would be broken; cheques would remain uncrossed; and a chasm would open, upon either side of which

should stand for ever Biscuit and Walrus, Carpenter and Cheese! But transcending all this was the extraordinary fact that "and" might be made to illustrate a great philosophic truth: "and" bound together, without touching the things which it joined; and was not this the glorious principle which it had been Monsieur's privilege to apprehend: the law of the Mushroom—Unity without Contact!

And who could speak of all that "day" suggested, without a shudder or a smile? Blinds were raised; the doors of virtue opened; the stars swept from the sky; the magnet of the Metropolis once more charged with its diabolic power to wrest the workman from his wife, the pauper from the provinces, the ice-cream seller from the Ionian Sea; that for another "day" the great world-engine should grind and groan. And so there would be a blaze and blister of heat, until the mushroom demanded darkness, and "night" came at its call, so that the "great exception" should express itself unseen.

It was intimated politely to Monsieur that, patient though the Committee were, they would prefer that he should, if pos-

sible, express for them the meaning of the words upon which, individually, he had treated with considerable eloquence. The Chairman, indeed, ventured to declare that Monsieur was "strangely sane"; and that his remarks "betrayed a grasp of logic" which, though "put to extravagant use," nevertheless, led one to believe that Monsieur's reasoning powers were normal. But why this intrusion of the mushroom? Monsieur's sense of humour should preserve him "from crowning all his logical processes with the head of His Most Martyred Majesty!"

This carefully-prepared impromptu was greeted with almost violent appreciation.

Monsieur at once appealed to the Committee to confirm his opinion that the Chairman alone was guilty of intruding King Charles's head. He, Monsieur, indeed reduced all things to mushrooms because he had discovered that all things could be so reduced; and he was free from criticism until those who desired to question his statement had studied the subject as deeply as he himself had done. Monsieur's introduction of the mushroom was perfectly legitimate. The Chair-



man, on the other hand, had clearly been unable to suppress his somewhat ambiguous reference to the deceased king. And his veiling of the metaphor indicated, so far as Monsieur could judge, a struggle of some standing. Monsieur suspected that the Chairman had at some time or other made a mental compact with himself to suppress the direct and hackneyed reference; and if unable to refrain, simply to put forth some pleasing though inclusive expression of the thought.

The Chairman with extraordinary gravity, which contrasted curiously with the laughter of his colleagues, informed Monsieur that he could afford to ignore any analysis from so prejudiced and questionable a quarter. Monsieur must attend to the matter in hand. Did he, or did he not, know the meaning of the words "Night and day"?

After some consideration, Monsieur declared that, speaking as a Philologist—

Amid much noise and laughter Monsieur was informed that the Committee had no occasion to be instructed in Philology, nor had it any desire to be instructed at that exact moment by Monsieur. The

question was simple. It remained to be answered.

After some consideration, Monsieur declared that, speaking as a lover of Logic, he objected that the question proposed was exclusive of what he was generous enough to suppose the Committee desired. They had asked for the meaning of the words. Was he, then, to conclude that they desired to ascertain the actual meaning which the words possessed when inscribed upon the head of the masquerader on this particular occasion?

That was it! Exactly to the point! The Committee unanimously congratulated Monsieur on his discernment and the lucidity of his expression.

At this Monsieur appeared much distressed. It was painful to disappoint earnest seekers after truth. But how, he appealed to them, how, in fairness, could they expect him to attach a meaning to words inscribed upon a mushroom in masquerade that had penetrated the silk hat of a Chairman of Committee? The Chairman had clearly broken the communication. How should a mushroom grown from a silk hat have the same value as a mush-

room grown in a field? Monsieur would venture upon the thin ice of no hypothesis. By accepting the inscription upon a masquerader, so strikingly presented to consciousness, he might become blind to the great truths which it was his joy to discover in the genuine mushroom. And there the matter must end. Now, Monsieur asked, by way of excuse, could he be certain that the Chairman had not placed the masquerader in his own hat, possibly as a relief to his feelings!

At this there was an uproar; but when silence became a possibility Monsieur appealed to the Committee to call to mind what he had said about the Chairman's weakness. Had they heard a similar reference to King Charles's head before?

Certainly not.

"But," Monsieur pleaded, "you cannot know with what subtlety he may have disguised it. For observe, in this instance, except for certain local associations, the metaphor could have been applied with equal force to a King of France!"

After that Monsieur was dismissed, and the Chairman put to some pains to exclude an unfortunate reference to himself on the

minutes of the Committee. There were some, however, who voted for the inclusion of those parts to which he offered objection, on account of their possessing much value as evidence of the mental processes of a lunatic.

Monsieur's tactless treatment of the Chairman was quite possibly responsible for his continued detention. The Chairman, indeed, possessing a taste for the delicacies of language, relished what Monsieur had said at the commencement of the inquisition, and allowed himself to suppose that before him there stood a patient and persecuted philosopher. It should be clear, therefore, that if Monsieur had been satisfied to accept—as all wise men accept—the meaning clearly intended for the meaning actually expressed, in place of crushing the Chairman unkindly, he might have been released.

The Chairman had reason to understand that ridicule is never so exquisitely acid as when it comes to be delivered from the dock. And Monsieur obtained at least a prize to console him when he gained the knowledge that it is never safe to joke at

the expense of one's judge. But he had apparently neglected to learn that retaliation should be undertaken only by the strong.

"The worm," he said to one of his keepers, as he left the room of Committee, "that turns should prepare for eternity!"

The picture, as we see it, is sad: Monsieur so near to liberty, yet not released. His believers preparing to welcome him at the prison gate, and sent back scowling and sorrowful to their work upon the wall; tearing, as they go, the laurel coronet that it might the better resemble a palm of martyrdom; for information as to the progress of the inquisition had been conveyed at intervals to them by a servant of the Asylum.

Monsieur, it appeared, had not suspected how near he had come to the sweets of slavery; so, when he was led from before the Committee, he returned with haste to the plantation of puff-balls. The unwearied attentions of the philosopher had somewhat reduced the number of dust-globes. And as the days passed, Monsieur found himself in possession of much powder; until at length he

considered that he might be contented with what his bag contained. Then it was that he strayed, with the bag in his arms, towards the boundary wall; and presently he wrenched a great cake of fungus from the arms of a low-built sycamore, and with a swing, tossed it over the wall. A vigorous oath might be offered as evidence that it struck a watcher in the outer world; but that is unimportant. The fact upon which it becomes necessary to concentrate our attention is that a scaling-ladder was suddenly shot over the wall, and lowered at Monsieur's feet. And when the slowly-working wits of the keepers had digested the objective reality of this apparition, Monsieur was already almost out of reach. And when they darted forward to claim the calves of his legs, the very sky seemed to split, and the sand of some celestial desert to descend upon them. Also there was something in this dust which appeared to penetrate their souls, and make pity, for a time, one of their emotions; so that when they struggled from the stupor of sympathy, Monsieur was already upon his feet in the outer

world,<sup>1</sup> waving an empty bag as the ritualists of the "ring" are wont to wave the towels of triumph

<sup>1</sup>I have documents in my possession which are evidence regarding Monsieur's conduct and investigations after he regained his freedom. He lived for some time under the protection of the keeper of a plant nursery, who had become so enthusiastic a believer in the doctrine of the Mushroom that he painted his glass-houses with a black light-excluding fluid, and cultivated the mushroom reverently. A primitive worship had already developed when Monsieur was restored to his followers. I have reason to believe that he prepared to encourage this, and, in some respects to modify it. But the world interfered. There is a journal before me which records frequent attacks upon the glass-houses; and there are references to search parties from the Asylum. I am enabled to trace the purchase of a sailing ship by the keeper of the plant nursery, and the embarkation of Monsieur and his followers upon this ship, the hold of which contained mushroom-spore bricks. After that, I have no reliable evidence. In *Merchgoldt's Diary*, however, there occurs a passage which I quote without comment:—

'At lat. 140, long. 20, we sighted a small island, which seemed a place where pure water might be found. The water was good; but with the exception of mushroom and fungus growths of all kinds, there was no vegetation. Some of the mushroom growths were the largest I have ever seen; and several of them bore an absurd resemblance to human faces. I took several photos.' One of the photographs, which I have seen, bears an extraordinary likeness to Monsieur.

## THE BOILER OF BONES.



HOSE whom Johnston hath fed, and such as have loved Smithfield, whisper one to another that a boiler of bones hath departed from the earth, yea, that Jane, whom the world called Aunt, is dead.

The world is blind, and to the world which is blind Aunt Jane was one who remaineth among the ruins, even a cheerful woman of much girth, that dwelt in an ancient habitation, nigh unto the region which aforetime bore the sign of a spade.

For the world, which is blind, she offered a window, behind whose casement a geranium, exceeding weary and desolate, struggled to live. And they that were blind who passed through her door saw a great fireplace, and over the fireplace a vast, smoke-stained cauldron, in which there simmered divers bones. And when the law had laid its hand upon such



as sold spirits, those who were cast forth, and they that were athirst, came unto Aunt Jane. And unto them she would say: "What wilt thou have to drink?" And straightway would she lay bottles of the Liffey, one by one, between her knees, and uncork them as though the cork itself were eager to escape.

"None," said the world, which is blind, "is able to draw the cork from a bottle of stout after the manner of Aunt Jane."

And before such as desired food or were an hungered would Aunt Jane lay a platter of steaming bones. And none dared to ask from what manner of carcase the bones were taken.

Makers of wealth would come unto Aunt Jane, and they that were poor, and they whose eyes were darkened, having fought with their own kin.

And many there were who declared that Aunt Jane had no store of good repute; and some there were who whispered curious tales. The scribe knoweth none of these things; for upon Aunt Jane his eyes have never rested. But the scribe hath inquired, yea, made diligent search;

and they whose word is as the laws of the Medes and Persians have declared that Aunt Jane was without blemish, and that her path was the path of the virtuous.

But there came unto the scribe one who told of Aunt Jane and of her glories, and of her cauldron of bones, and of her skill as a puller of stout; so that the scribe longed to see her and to learn her wisdom. But before his desire could be satisfied she was dead; yea, even before one with whom she was familiar could lead the scribe to her abode she had passed away. And the scribe called this one privily unto him, and said: "That which is called Aunt Jane is dead; yea, while thou wast abroad upon thy journey she departed from among the children of men."

And he answered and said unto the scribe: "That which hath been told thee is false. She is not dead; and even if what thou sayest be true, there must of a surety arise another like unto her. But take heed what thou sayest; for that which is called Aunt Jane dieth not."

Yet the world—which is blind—hath declared that much gold, even five thousand talents, remained after she had died.

And some there are who declare that they whom the law had commanded to keep watch upon such as pulled stout in the darkness received their reward, even four hundred talents of gold given unto the centurion of the constabulary. For that was the will of her that was dead; and such was decreed by those who interpreted the written desires of her who had departed unto another place.

Smithfield is fair; the Willick Woman tradeth in the daylight; that which is called Johnston giveth food upon the pages of salvation, and preacheth to such as have drunken strong wine. But that which was called Aunt Jane was a worker in darkness, and her spirit seemed like unto the darkened spaces of the moon. For she dwelt in the shadow of darkness; and made a sacrifice of bones unto strange gods. She lived through evil days; and was as one who pitcheth his tent near unto a camp of them that rob fools. And it came to pass that such as were of ill repute were driven away and scattered; but the temple of that which is called Aunt Jane remained, and from her cauldron there arose the vapour of bones.

Yet shall the scribe sing her praises,  
and set at naught them that claim to be  
like unto her.

Let the dwellers of Smithfield mourn;  
let the Willick Women lift up their voices;  
and let that which is called Johnston make  
known that one who was great hath  
departed, and that from this city of success  
there hath gone forth a strange beauty.  
And let them whose eyes are blinded  
believe that she, who was an aunt unto  
many, boileth bones no more for ever, and  
draweth stout no longer for them that are  
athirst.

Let the constabulary rejoice. Let the  
centurion of the constabulary be glad; yea,  
let them she hath enriched make merry.  
But if that which is called Aunt Jane were  
dead this city of success would be poorer  
by her entry into the grave; and the place  
which bore the sign of the spade should  
know her no more.

Who is this that boileth bones in the  
darkness? Who is this, sister of a parent,  
she that offereth curious sacrifice? She  
hath the hill of caves for a companion, and  
keepeth her place as long as the rivers  
endure. That which the blind have

called Jane is without end; for they who tread the ruins about her temple can testify that she liveth. She it is that offereth sacrifice for fools; and at her bidding the moon revealeth the face which she hideth from the children of men.



## THE MADMAN.

**H**E was a shabby little man, with an indescribable air of importance about him; and he plied his trade with laudable determination.

His hairdressing shop hid itself away in a narrow lane off Dame Street. Tired City clerks were his important asset; and he cut their fast-thinning hair with dexterity, making witty remarks, and occasionally selling some personally-compounded tonic for baldness.

His morning trade was almost all shaving; and he kept two meek and doleful little boys and a heavy-faced assistant to help him to cope with the early rush.

The little boys prepared the customers' faces by dabbling soap on them with a bountiful brush, and rubbing the lather in until it had softened the hair sufficiently.

Keen Crot was the nickname he went by in the vicinity. The origin of this piece

of wit has never been traced by man, woman, or child; but the name Keen Crot seemed to fit him somehow.

One of the regular customers for a morning shave was a quiet and drab old man, who had been, it was said, the first person to enter the barber's shop after the painters had finished. That was twenty years before; and each day he came in precisely at the same hour.

There are thousands of such men in the world; and perhaps the world is better for them. His hour of entry was five minutes past ten.

Once he arrived just at ten o'clock—for he heard the clock strike—and he waited until the five minutes had passed before he opened the door. But that was only once. On his entry, Keen Crot would look up from his work, and smile at him solemnly, and say—no matter what the weather might be—"Fine day, Mr. Garrick; fine day, sir."

"It is," the other would answer. "It is, Mr. Crot." And then one of the doleful little boys would take him in hand.

No one knew exactly what Mr. Garrick did all day; but the two doleful little

boys would confide in each other to the effect that they were sure he kept a chemist's shop somewhere. But they were never really certain.

The trouble began with Keen Crot very slowly indeed. It worried him more and more, however, as the days passed; and naturally he confided in no one, for he had really no person to confide in, if it came to that. He found out after a couple of months that it worried him more just while Mr. Garrick was in the shop. He almost forgot about it after he left. Then he began to wonder if it were right to serve such a person as Mr. Garrick. But so regular a customer could not easily be spared. He felt very wise in his knowledge; but being passive troubled him. To think that so harmless-looking a man as Mr. Garrick could be guilty of such a terrible crime! But there was no doubt whatever about it. Had he not plainly seen the secret in Mr. Garrick's eyes? And Saint Patrick's was a great building, too—a very great Cathedral. He would tell them in time, however—all in good time—before it actually fell. And then he wondered where Mr. Garrick had found



the beetle. That troubled him very much; but most of all he felt his sin—it was almost a sin; indeed, it was worse than a sin—in not warning the people at Saint Patrick's, on the very day he made the discovery. But he excused himself by saying that he was not really sure about it at first. And so cunning a crime it was, too, on the part of Garrick! Who would have thought of a more diabolical agency than he had used? It must be getting near the first of the foundations. And then the spire must fall! And then, look at the man—why, no person would think he was guilty, at first sight of him. But Keen Crot made allowances for their stupidity. Everyone was not as wise as he. He had gone so far as to walk up to one of the vergers in the Cathedral, intending to tell him the dread secret; but at the last moment he decided to postpone it for a whole year. That would give them something to discover. The beetle should have the foundations eaten away almost by that time; and then they would know that what he spoke was truth. He waited a whole year, and then set out for

Saint Patrick's. A verger he enticed into a corner.

"I want to tell you something of the utmost importance," he said.

"And what is that?"

"I am a hairdresser, and I shave people in the morning," Keen Crot replied, with assurance in his voice. "There is a man who comes to me—he has come to me for the past twenty years—and he, in his heart, is very wicked.

"I was shaving him one day, when he told me his secret. He told me that he had buried a beetle at the side of the Cathedral, and that it would eat away the foundations, until the spire fell down. Of course, it is a great sin—I mean I should have told you about it long ago. You will have the foundations mended, now that I have told you?"

"The matter shall receive immediate attention, sir," said the verger, with a very serious face. "You say he told you that he buried a beetle? Beetle burying's getting far too common these days."

"Well," said Keen Crot, "I saw it in his eyes. You know that that's really more reliable than speech."

"So I have heard," said the verger. "But I'm not a clever man like you. Well, good-day, sir. I'm sure I'm most grateful to you for your information."

Keen Crot smiled a superior smile.

"Thanks, my good man, thanks," he said. "By the way, you might mention to Lord Iveagh that the matter will be attended to. He is a clever man like myself, and perhaps he may know something about the beetle too. If he does, you can ease his mind, and tell him that the spire is quite secure. When you have finished the repairs, you should arrange to punish Mr. Garrick."

"I think that there is no need to punish him," said the verger. "If we spoil his plans for him, that should be sufficient for him."

"I don't agree with you," said Keen Crot. "But I'll call here this day month, and see what you have to say. Meanwhile, I'll keep an eye on Mr. Garrick."

A month from that date, the verger met him again.

"Well," said Keen Crot; "what did I tell you?"

"The foundations, thanks to you, are

safe," said the verger. "The beetle is dead; I killed him myself in a pail of lime and water."

"That is good," said Keen Crot, who felt very important indeed. "That is good. Now what do you propose to do to Mr. Garrick?"

"It has been decided to do nothing. We think that it may be wiser to leave him alone."

"As you will. I don't agree with you," said Keen Crot. He left the verger without another word, and walked home rapidly.

The two doleful boys were fighting as he entered the shop. They stopped, and regarded him with a certain awe.

"He's lookin' odd enough now," said the younger of the two.

"They are satisfied to let the guilty go unpunished," remarked Keen Crot to himself, as he removed his coat in the little room at the back of the shop. "Justice is justice, however, and must be upheld; and who is to uphold it save myself?"

The following morning, Mr. Garrick entered the shop at five minutes past ten, and looked at his watch, for he felt that

there was something amiss—he could not tell what. Then he remembered.

Keen Crot had omitted to remark upon the weather. His smile also was absent.

“A fine day, Mr. Crot,” he said.

“Fine, indeed,” said the other. “Fine weather for the criminal classes!”

Mr. Garrick looked fixedly at Keen Crot as he stropped a razor. Then he sat down, and laid his head on the adjustable pad at the back of the seat.

“A fine morning, indeed, sir,” said Keen Crot. He was surely smiling now. “But it remains for me to see that justice is upheld,” he remarked, as he drew the glittering blade across Mr. Garrick’s throat.

One of the doleful boys fainted. There was a jug of boiling water spilled by someone.

“I’ll go and tell them that he’s here, if they wish to see him,” said Keen Crot. But a policeman had him by the arm before he reached the end of the lane, and seemed very unwilling to part with him.

“He put a beetle under the foundations of Saint Patrick’s spire,” the barber explained to the officer at the police-

station; "and as the authorities of the Cathedral refused to punish him, I felt it my duty to see justice done."

"Very wise indeed, sir; very wise indeed," said a kind-looking doctor who sat beside the officer.

JULIUS McCULLOUGH  
LECKEY CRAIG.



N this city of success there is one who hath carried for many days the fame of a street poet. Whence he came or whither he is going hath no mystery even for the blind, that is for the world which believes it can see.

Julius McCullough Leckey Craig is his name; and his hair has grown white with much singing. He is the bard of the poor; and for those who desire to know of his renown as the world, which is blind, knoweth it, the scribe shall declare that Julius is a small man, burdened with many parchments, which he is eager to sell, each for a penny; and these are his songs. He sang for many days that which was in his heart; and being a child of this city of success, suckled amid dust and the vomit of mill-stocks, he gave his love to the sea.

In a score of years his art has decayed ; but there was a time when he sang :

*“ The sun is shinin’ here very bright,  
I am standin’ here in his glorious light.  
To Bangor and to Ballyholme,  
By early trains to thee I come.”*

After the passage of ten years the scribe sought him out, and reminded him of this song, and said : “ You remember a poem you wrote about Bangor and Ballyholme ? ”

“ Man, I do that ! I sold three thousand of them. They were quare and popular ; but it takes a lot of trampin’ to sell a thousand now.”

“ In the old days,” said the scribe, “ you wrote about the things which pleased you greatly, the things which you felt. And that is why the people bought your poems. Then you began to write to please others ; you wrote about religious and political things which did not interest you. That was your mistake.”

For a time he pondered on these words of the scribe, and then he declared :

“ Thon poem about Bangor and Ballyholme was quare and popular with the



Scotch. I mind bein' down on the Bangor pier one night, and a Scotchman called out : 'There's a great poem about Bangor and Ballyholme and Donaghadee by Mister Craig. I'll give half-a-crown to anyone for a copy; for I have to catch the boat the night.' And there I was on the skim of the crowd, and couldn't get near him before a man hands out my poem, and gets his half-crown. But I was quare an' pleased to see a penny poem goin' for half-a-crown."

Then the scribe said unto Mr. Craig :

"There was one who lived before your time, whose name I know not, and my memory holdeth merely a fragment of what he has written. Here is one verse :

*On Carrick shore I stood, I stood,  
And gaped across at Holywood;  
And as I gaped I saw afar  
My love upon the Kinnegar."*

"Man! that's a grand poem; that's the real stuff," were the words of Mr. Craig.

"There are other fragments," said the scribe. "Here is one :

*I'm the gaffer of the boys what boil the hot  
ash-falt,  
An' up there came a polis man;  
An' says he to me—'Maguire,  
Wiil ye let me light me owl' clay pipe  
At your big boiler fire?'  
I drew back from the shoulder,  
An' I hit him such a walt,  
That I knocked thon peeler spinnin'  
Into the hot ash-falt.*

There is yet another," said the scribe :

*"My love he is a brave young man,  
He lives on Carrick Hill.  
If you give him eggs and bacon  
He's the boy can eat his fill!"*

And the heart of Julius McCullough Leckey Craig was made glad. As a poet of the poor in this city of success, the work of a master who had gone silently before him, and whose name was lost, filled him with much joy; and he said: "There's a great poet in the town as well as meself. I would like you to meet him. Fought with Roberts at Kandahar. A terrible fine intellect. They call him Mr. Moore.

JULIUS McCULLOUGH CRAIG 87

Makes a livin' sellin' bits of flowers. Man! he can write up a quare fine poem. I've seen him do sixty lines in no time."

And the scribe engaged Julius to lead him privily unto the dwelling of the great poet; but ere the day came the scribe had been taken to dwell in dungeons with men called together from the four corners of Ireland, and Julius McCullough Leckey Craig saw him no more. This the scribe hath written for the world which is blind.

But of Julius what shall he say? Who is this that singeth the songs of the poor? Who is this that giveth speech unto such as are dumb, and who loveth them that go down unto Bangor in ships? Who is this that panteth for the coasts of Pickie, and whose soul goeth thereunto by many trains, even by early trains which leave behind them the smoke of this city of success?

He hath a sad countenance, yet a smile is ever upon his face. Ashes are upon him, yet he weareth no sackcloth. His sandals are worn with much travel; yet he dwelleth ever among his own people. His beard hath grown white with age; yet he hath the heart of a little child.

Let them who would understand this mystery inquire of the Willick Woman; let them feast with that which is called Johnston, and draw nigh unto the habitation of her that aforetime boiled bones as a sacrifice for fools. Let them dwell in Smithfield, and follow the Fishman upon that journey which hath no end.

Then shall they encompass the greatness of Julius, and unto them shall be made known the secret of him whom the world calleth Craig. For Julius is a poet of the streets, and he, whom the world calleth Craig, singeth for the poor who have no voice. Julius is of the demigods, and holdeth not the mysteries of them which are unknown. Yet shall he be numbered among the immortals, and dwell with them, though their glory belongeth not unto him.

For Julius speaketh no oracle. He interpreteth for them that are blind those mysteries to which they may draw nigh.

Yet shall the scribe sing his praises, and give honour unto one that is simple of heart.

## THE LITTLE CHILD, THE WISEST OF ALL.



**S**HAMUS once went off by himself for a walk.

He lived quite close to a large enclosed wood in a corner of the Wicklow Mountains, and, as he used to tell his father, the trees in this wood were very fond of him; so on this particular day he went for a walk among his friends the big trees. He followed a narrow path, which led straight through the wood; and as he walked, the trees seemed to be talking about him to each other. He had heard them talking before; but he always found it very hard to describe how they talked. As he said to his father, "You can only hear them talk when they are making no sound." And the curious thing was that his father seemed to understand what he meant.

Well, this day, as he walked along, the big trees seemed to have a great deal to say to each other; but he noticed that every

time he stopped to listen to them, they stopped talking.

And presently a queer thing happened—a field-mouse came running along the path and stood looking very hard at him. Then it turned about and walked in front of him for a while. At length it commenced to run very hard.

Shamus thought he would like to see where it was going, so he started to run after it. He was so interested in watching the mouse, which kept just a few yards ahead of him, that he didn't notice two strange old men who stood upon either side of the path, until he was quite close to them. They were very small and very old, with bright clever eyes, and their clothes seemed to belong to them just as leaves belong to a tree; indeed, when the little boy looked at the old men, they seemed so much a part of the wood that he wondered why he had not seen them before. He was a little nervous, in the same way as one might be nervous in company with an old willow-tree, which seemed likely at any moment to turn into something with eyes and hands and all the rest.

But Shamus was not going to allow the old men to see that he was afraid, so he just walked on. And he was greatly surprised when he came up between them, for they bowed solemnly to him, and, without speaking, each slipped his arm beneath the arm of the young lad which was next to him, and so, with arms linked, they marched solemnly on together.

Now this may seem very odd, but Shamus thought, though he couldn't tell why, that it was all somehow just what should happen, in the same way that it is right and proper for ducks to march one after the other, or for trout to keep their heads up stream, or for midges to stay together in crowds and dance up and down in the twilight. So without any talk whatever, the three small figures arrived before a great piece of rock that pushed itself up, as one might imagine, to see what was going on.

One of the little men took hold of a lump in the rock. The lump seemed to turn quite easily, just like a handle; and immediately a door opened in the rock, and the little boy saw a number of steps leading underground. Shamus followed one of the old men down these steps, while the other

old man closed the door, and came after him. Presently the steps came to an end, and Shamus found himself in a large room.

In the centre of the room there was a stone block about the height of an ordinary table, and upon this block there lay a cat. Shamus had never before seen so large a cat. It was as big as a tiger, but it was quite clearly only a cat. In the room there were about fifty little old men exactly like the two who had brought him there.

Shamus was looking about him, and was wondering how he could possibly see in an underground room with no windows and no light of any sort, when all at once he heard a voice speaking to him; and he discovered that all the little old men were talking together. But as each was saying exactly the same thing as everyone else at exactly the same moment, all the voices together sounded like one voice. And this is what they were saying to him: "*You must ride on the cat; and the cat will bring you to the cage; and from the cage you must bring back the golden mouse.*"

"But how shall I know the way?" asked Shamus.



“The cat,” said the voices of the little men, “knows the way. Here are three cakes for your journey; and here is the key of the cage.”

Shamus was quite delighted by this time with everything that had happened. It was all so like a fairy tale; and he felt that the adventure would be spoiled if he did not do what he was told. So he climbed upon the cat's back; and the great animal stood up while the whole room trembled with its purring. The two little men who had guided him gave the young hero a golden key, and three sweetened cakes; and he had scarcely clasped these when the cat sprang, as it seemed to Shamus, against the wall. But the wall was not like other walls; for Shamus and the cat passed through it just as they might have passed through smoke; and immediately they were out in the wood, rushing through the trees.

The cat apparently knew its way, for it went very fast, and turned now to the right, and now to the left. Presently the ground began to rise, and Shamus saw before him a steep, rocky hill covered with great trees. As they began to mount the hill, three huge dogs came rushing down upon them; so

Shamus threw his three sweetened cakes to the dogs, and so passed this danger safely.

At the very top of the hill there stood a round tower covered with ivy, and at the door of the tower there sat a skeleton with a spear in its hand. When the skeleton saw the cat and its rider it rose up, and raised the spear as though it were prepared to prevent their approaching the door. But the cat sprang into the ivy which clothed the tower, and climbed very swiftly, while Shamus clung round its neck.

It stopped only when it had reached the highest windows. Shamus supposed that he was intended to enter the tower, so he gripped the ivy, and crawled over the cat's head, into the topmost room of the tower. In the centre of the room there hung a golden cage, and in the cage there was a mouse with golden hair.

Shamus was admiring the mouse when he heard a clattering sound, and he knew that the skeleton with the spear was climbing the staircase of the tower, and would soon be upon him. He felt very frightened; but he unlocked the cage, and lifted out the golden mouse. Then he climbed out of the window; and as he was putting his arms

round the neck of the cat the door of the room in which he had stood was pushed open, and the skeleton rushed to the window and cast its spear. But the cat, seeing the spear coming, lowered itself so that the spear passed over the little boy's head.

And soon they were upon the ground rushing back upon the way they had come. At the foot of the hill the dogs were waiting for them, and came running up to meet them; and they merely barked with welcome as the cat and its rider passed them. In a few minutes the journey was over, and the cat and Shamus were upon the slab of stone, surrounded by the little old men.

"*Give the mouse its liberty!*" said all the little old men together.

So Shamus jumped to the floor and allowed the mouse to escape. And then something remarkable happened. The underground room melted quite away and changed to a garden, in the centre of which there was a life-like cat carved out of black marble. And playing in the garden there were fifty boys, whose eyes glistened in the amber sunlight, when, seeing him standing

there, each stopped his play and came to welcome the young hero, whose courage and zeal had made them young again.







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